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ABSTRACT

An eight-course curriculum in social policy analysis which follows a policy analysis paradigm is proposed. The undergraduate curriculum concentrates on the ability to appreciate and operate under uncertainty: anticipation of interrelated, unexpected ramifications of new stimuli: understanding of the social construction of problems and their cures; and methods of communication for optimum intervention. The nine-step social policy analysis paradigm includes identifying the problem and proposed cure, defining the conceptual background of the problem, considering ethical and contrasting value positions, identifying limitations of the proposed cure, and defining what will be done to whom. Also, it is necessary to isolate and anticipate confounding variables; monitor events; evaluate direct, indirect, and unanticipated impacts; and communicate results at all stages. The first two courses, Research for Policy Analysis and Forecasting Social Futures, cover anticipation and evaluation. Isolation and control of confounding variables provide the focus for course three, Implementation of Policy and four, Field Research and Social Integration. Monitoring social change is examined in the fifth course, Case Studies in Social Policy and the sixth, Social Indicators and the Quality of Life. The final two courses, Modelling and Interactive Computing and a Seminar in Policy Analysis focus on communication. A major part of the document applies the policy analysis paradigm to the proposed curriculum. (KC)

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TOWARD A SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS CURRICULUM*

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TOWARD A SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS CURRICULUM

(ABSTRACT)

An undergraduate program in policy analysis should be based on the dimensions underlying the union of theory, practice, and evaluation. Two traditional ways to avoid this search for basic conceptual dimensions are: (1) to prepare students to be research assistants and to assume that they will learn the "important things" on the job, or, (2) to prepare students to be administrative assistants skilled at consuming current publications and interpreting them to administrators. These typical curriculum foci are necessary but limited sub-elements of the required technical training. When they are artificially raised to the status of program goals they create graduates who retreat into either methodological or theoretical rigidities because they lack a sense of the meaning and flexibility of their skills.

We propose that policy analysis education concentrate on basic conceptual skills of direct policy analysis: (1) the ability to appreciate, and operate under, uncertainty; (2) anticipation of interrelated, but at the same time unexpected, ramifications of new stimuli; and, (3) understanding of the social construction of problems and their "cures", and methods of communication for optimum intervention.

The proposed eight-course curriculum is treated as though it, itself, were a policy innovation to be analyzed. It will be presented using a Policy Analysis Paradigm; a format that facilitates program analysis by forcing decisions on the interrelationships of ends and means, and definitions of specific criterion variables and their measurements.

TOWARD A CURRICULUM FOR SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS

Policy analysis is the most inclusive of all sociological teaching goals. It demands that theoretical understanding and sophisticated evaluation methodology be combined with the ability to analyze social problems within specific contexts. It also demands an understanding of policy makers' motivations so that knowledge is presented with impact. Full preparation cannot be accomplished during undergraduate training. And yet, there is a great need to prepare undergraduates to appreciate the policy implications of either their graduate training, or their roles in future administrative structures. The growing need, and indeed demand, for accountability and evaluation is a recognition of the frequent lack of association between policy goals and program actions. If the student plans graduate training, an inclusive integrated policy-sensitive preparation will help avoid premature decisions about specialization that might be forced by confrontation with the unrealistic academic categories of research versus theory, or pure versus applied studies. If, on the other hand, the student plans immediate employment in government or social service there is also a strong need for policy analysis skills. Few worthless programs would last long if middle-level administrators, or the workers "on the line", had the means of articulating their feelings of program irrelevance or misdirection.

Adequate social policy analysis, of course, requires skills available in each of the social and behavioral sciences. Anticipating the social effects of proposed policies demands use of insights from historical, psychological, sociological, political and often geographical-environmental theories. Evaluating the actual outcomes of specific programs also

requires technical-research capabilities, (such as, familiarity with experimental design, survey techniques, social change analysis), that are usually emphasized in separate disciplines (Nachmias, 1979). They can only be brought to true synthesis, (and therefore, truly practical application), when applied to a concrete program or proposal. In addition to these "interdisciplinary and practical" goals, social policy analysis fulfills the educational purpose of clearly demonstrating, within each discipline, the necessary relationship between the historical-theoretical development of basic concepts, and the methodologies needed to implement them. Study of a developing social issue, and evaluating policies that have tried to affect it, will highlight the necessary connection of theory and empirical assessment: " . . social beliefs and action are essentially relative. Whereas the consideration of the physical and spatial properties of the world concretizes it and reassures us, a social perspective makes a great deal of what we take for granted highly problematic, (Bailey, 1975:9)."

This paper will assume that the necessary interdisciplinary content can be added to fit the local situation, and talents that are available. It will be limited to the basic structure of conceptual skills needed to prepare students to be able to absorb the multiple complications of integrating theory, research and social change analysis. Our emphasis on conceptual, and even emotional, preparation derives from a desire to avoid the two typical shortcuts used in Policy Analysis Training. It is usually treated as an "applied" science and students trained as <u>apprentices</u> by creating: (1) research assistants, by teaching data analysis techniques, or (2) administrative assistants by teaching techniques of

library research for the interpretation/summarization of publications. The decision to concentrate on underlying attitudes and skills derives partly from recent discussions among statisticians who are concerned with making statistics matter. Roberts (1978) concluded that their association with uncertainty, and their scientific credo that it was necessary to make an overt statement of all statistical results in terms of degrees of uncertainty, are the central elements keeping statisticians from "mattering" in the world of policy. The emotional need to feel certainty during decision making, or at least to be able to quote techniques that yield apparent "certainties", when defending a chosen course of action, makes statistics a poor competitor to less sophisticated methods that appear to assure total certainty. Robert's suggested solution is the teaching of case studies. This would develop, among policy makers and administrators, a tolerance for ambiguity, and provide practice in defining the uncertainty of real-life outcomes. The present program expands upon this case study level of training to develop basic components of a general frame of reference that can be adapted to specific policy problems.

FORMAT: SOCIAL POLICY THE ANALYSIS PARADIGM

Two things will be presented at the same time. The components of the proposed undergraduate curriculum will be structured by, and used to illustrate, a paradigm for social policy analysis, (see Chart One). That is, the curriculum will be analyzed as if it were a policy innovation. The goals of the paradigm are to make underlying assumptions and conceptions as overt as possible so that they can be measured, monitored, and evaluated. The paradigm stems from a definition of the process of policy decision, program design and evaluation as imperfect anticipation followed

by continuous compromise.

First, program design and evaluation cannot be separated from policy decision as means are separated from goals. We cannot rely on the political process to work out the goal that is defined as "the common good" by competing interest groups. Nor can we assume that implementation will be carried out and evaluated through "impartial rationality", (Rein, 1976: 100). Research and policy are only conceptually distinguishable into layers, or degrees of complexity. The notion that policy research is any more complex or advanced that "exploratory" research assumes levels of sophistication that do not yet exist in Social Science, (Stimson and Stimson, 1979).

Second, policy innovation is not seen as a simple stimulus, nor the context as a stable functional system to be "restructured". The presented paradigm emphasizes anticipation and adaptation to continuous uneven change. It has been our experience that even the apparently most intransigent bureaucratic structure is in continuous flux. The movement may be directionless, or, often the changes take contradictory directions, but if your program does not "keep up" it will be left behind. Your results, no matter how powerful, will be seen as relating to yesterday's, already "solved", problem.

This is not to say that adaptation to the research situation, in itself, is the main goal. The emphasis is stated over-strongly in order to counteract the widespread dedication to the apparently clearcut, (time one - stimulate . . . time two - evaluate), design. The monastic need to be structured and artificial that this oversimplified design imposes is best illustrated with a quote from its main proponents, Campbell and

Stanley, (1963):

> "We must instill in our students the expectation of tedium and disappointment and the duty of thorough persistence, by now so well achieved in the biological and physical sciences. We must expand our students' vow of poverty to include not only the willingness to accept poverty of finances, but also a poverty of experimental results." (Campbell and Stanley, 1963:3).

Notice that the paradigm presented in Chart One can be used both before and after a program is underway. Its main use should be in designing or proposing program in order to assure that adequate definition and flexibility have been built-in. The items, of course, can be collapsed together or expanded, as necessary. We suggest that you pause and run through the paradigm now, and then we will proceed by using the proposed social policy analysis curriculum as an illustration of its use.

(Chart One Here)

THE PROPOSED CURE AND ITS CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The terminology, "cure", derives from Hewitt and Hall's (1973), work on quasi-theories in the social construction of social problems. They suggest that trouble, whether societal or personal, is often handled by, first, selecting an existing (and possibly non-relevant) "cure" from the cultural stock of known solutions, and then, second, justifying it through a verbal "build-around" of quasi-theoretical legitimations. If a researcher or policy maker happens to suggest a cure that is new, and/or novel, they must first take the time to destroy alternative quasi-theory structures (Stimson and Stimson, 1977a,b). We propose to "cure", if you will, the present problems of teaching social policy analysis by first correcting or reversing three prevalent emphases that are constricting the scope of analysis.

The first misemphasis is on issues of academic theory, (for example concentration on the confrontation of functionalism and conflict-theories), rather than on existing quasi-theories. When any form of a social constructionist viewpoint is taken, the traditional debates about the theoretical importance of policy, (or vice versa), are less than meaningful. The existing quasi-theories and/or ideologies, can, themselves, become the center of analysis. What is theoretically meaningful and relevant to practice is how and why currently operating definitions of social life were constructed? These questions, of course, lead indirectly to discussions of, and needed training in, models of man and society, so that sociological theories remain crucial. The order of presentation, however, is all important. Studying what culturally exists first, and only then moving on to theoretical concepts in order to provide notions of what "should" or "might" exist, precludes the adoption of pre-set perspectives. The, existential, social constructionist position, therefore would seem better able to combat the perpetuation of "advocacy" researches. Those used simply to illustrate an instance of some pretaken, biased position that is known to have a market available.

Second, the misemphasis on the need for <u>control</u> of the situation, is perhaps the most powerful and frequently made mistake. By adopting the laboratory experiment as the only "true" evaluation design, all analysts are trained to limit their vision to the few variables they can control or manipulate. They are unable to deal with the uncertainties and fluidities of any real situation. There are two well-known obvious deficiencies with the pure experimental model: (1) In order to prove your program works you must control, (or randomize away) the effects of <u>all</u>

other possible causal forces, (we all know that this is impossible in a complex social situation, but many of us keep trying and surprisingly few voices are raised to point out the impossibilities). (2) Furthermore, and most objectionable, this control is attempted through pre-design, before the program enters the setting. Obviously, many of the powerful forces are impossible to know, and there is no possible way to make provision for multiplicative interactions, or higher order ramifications.

We propose a strong emphasis on anticipation and monitoring, rather than on control and manipulation, (Epstein and Tripodi, 1977). This means replacing the emphasis on the technology of experimentation with the frame of reference and techniques necessary for the forecasting of possible futures, (Fowles, 1978). The development of social or situational indicators in order to monitor widespread inevitable change over time, becomes the central methodology.

The emotional and conceptional shifts in emphases are more important than the technological. The students will no longer be taught to concentrate on the few manipulable variables (income taxes, employment, etc.), or on the few social categories that can be randomized (age, sex, ethnicity). Instead they will be introduced to a dynamic world of uncertainty and partial knowledge, (just what they will probably find in graduate school, or the "real" world).

The third suggested re-emphasis is related to the communication and implementation of results, (Stimson and Stimson, 1977:6). Educational concentration on the thesis, the term paper, or "final report", as the one presentation of a project's achievements, assures that future results

will have almost no policy impact. If, in addition, the report is written in the standard academic format of: theoretical background; definition of the problem; methodology, etc., then the possibility that policy makers will read it is completely negated. (At best, it may be read by one of the administrative assistants who was trained in that academic style of communication and who has been on the job only a short time, and not yet become impatient with such artificial formats). Effective communication of new knowledge demands constant verbal communication, at all stages of a project. And, communication does not mean passive presentation of findings, but active investigation of, and if necessary destruction of, the policy makers' social constructions, definitions and preferred cures, so that "room" can be made for the new knowledge.

These re-emphases derive from a specific conception of policy analysis, below, that will be follwed closely throughout the rest of the paradigm, and will be the direct source of the evaluation criteria for the proposed curriculum.

A DEFINITION OF SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS

Social Policy Analysis attempts: (1) To understand the origination, formulation and implications of existing, and needed, social policies; (2) To measure and evaluate the effectiveness of a program's expected impacts; (3) To recognize as early as possible the unexpected consequences of policy induced changes so that programs may be modified to avoid undesirable interactions, and capitalize on unanticipated ameliorations.

Two assumptions are implicit. First, policy formulation and implementation are intricate socio-political processes in which problems and issues are redefined and often recreated. Second, the traditional stimulus-response model of effecting or evaluating change, (that one specific change can be implemented to cause one specific effect), is rejected. It is replaced by one recognizing that even the apparently simplest societal change involves many variables which might mingle and linger to cause joint impacts which may magnify or contradict the original intention.

COMPROMISES NECESSITATED BY THE CONTEXT

Most educational situations allow for a specialization, or honors concentration requiring less than the eight traditional courses presented in Chart Two. We felt that it was more useful for us to present more, and let the reader adapt by selection of those most relevant. We realize, of course, that even all eight do not constitute a total preparation. We have tried to fit our essential training into a two year program with one required course in each semester. In order to compensate for any lack of real-life experiences, each course would have to contain many team research events, and, most important, frequent verbal and written reports.

DEFINITION OF THE PROGRAM

The remaining paradigm items are best explained through specific descriptions of the proposed courses, (see Chart Two). Notice that the

(Chart Two Here)

title-headings explain the major topic of each semester. The first semester is given to research and to forecasting sensitization. The following three semesters' topics enlarge upon items 6, 7, 8 from the social policy analysis paradigm by defining: isolation of compounding factors through study of implementation problems; monitoring events and inventing necessary adaptations during social change; and communication for impact with policy makers.

Two essential dimensions unite these courses. The first is the development of a sensitivity to the breadth of the total social situation and the variety of possible ramifications of any intervention.

The second dimension is best explained by reference back to the "Do Statisticians Matter?" debate. Welsch, (1978) notes an apparent paradox in the staffing of market research. Ninety-seven percent of research

managers said that potential recruits should have been exposed to statistics. And yet, few market research positions are occupied by statisticians. Welsch explains the discrepancy by saying that "data relevance and data quality are as important as the statistical analysis," (1978:52). The ability to select which data to collect, and which to trust, demands ability to quickly explore and understand social situations and organizations.

The courses that attempt to exemplify these dimensions are combinations of relevant case studies and insights from: social impact analysis, (Wolf, 1976); basic forecasting methods, (Chisholm and Whitaker, 1971); normative forecasting, (Bezes and Targ, 1975); and futuristics, (Fowles, 1978); as well as policy and social change studies, (Demerath, Larsen, Schuessler, 1975); and research skills (presented below).

A SAMPLE COURSE PROPOSAL

We present only the outline of the basic course; Research For Social Policy Analysis. We hope it exemplifies the attempt to broaden the usual definitions by including elements that prepare students for the uncertainties of policy-practice situations, and the many possible uses of research they generate, (Weiss, 1978:27-36).

Research for Social Policy Analysis

(The course will assume some knowledge of data collection and analysis, including introductory statistics). This will be a "methodology" rather than a "practice in techniques" course. Concentration will be placed on the strategies, compromises, and compensatory methods that are necessary when researchers leave the laboratory, and/or the academic setting and communication network. Three major problems will form the organization of the course, they are:

(1) Adapting research origination and design to policy problems involves:
    (a) finding manipulable variables that represent the policy concepts;

(b) formulating meaningful hypotheses without "giving-in" to ideology or transitory popular appeal;
(c) quasi-experimental designs and beyond, adapting to the field situation and entering organizational structures.

(2) Special measurement, collection and analysis problems;
(a) the difficulties in measuring change, such as (i) finding a scientific criterion of success or failure that all concerned can agree upon, (ii) facing the problems of curvilinear rates of change.
(b) the measurement of interactions between variables, the regression model for comprehensive coverage of possible factors, and the ANOVA model (utilizing dummy variable analysis) for assessment of the contributions of specific factors or combinations of factors.
(c) problems of longitudinal data collection, (i) panel surveys, mini-surveys and sample attrition, (ii) the virtures of existing and unobtrusive indicators, rather than entering, and inevitably altering, the organizational structure.
(d) time series analysis of social indicators, the recognition of "real" turning points, dominant components, interrelationships between multiple time series, and autocorrelation effects.

(3) Effective presentation of policy research; making knowledge significant:
(a) communicating with policy makers, (i) overcoming the false stigmas of "popularizer" or "applied" researcher, (ii) recognition that all evaluations are recommendations and should be overtly constructed to be useful.
(b) Integrating knowledge intc existing theories and combatting competing ideologies;
(c) Statistical conventions in measuring effectiveness, the state of the art, (i) how much change is "significant", for the particular problem, (ii) statistical models of causation and attempts to control outside factors, (iii) judging generalizability: will the program work in the external world?
(d) relating to policy makers, the final report is usually merely a contractural obligation rather than an impact-document, (i) the routine of keeping in touch, (ii) combatting and/or adjusting to policy makers emotional or career investments in particular "cures", (iii) adapting the research to the constant change surrounding the program. How much do you react?

EVALUATION

The final evaluation of this curriculum must include, of course, measures of its ability to place graduates in useful policy positions. As we have been emphasizing, however, evaluation should begin as early as possible, and should be continuous. We have tried to identify the

central criteria of educational progress that would allow monitoring of the program. The exact testing procedures should be developed in the specific situation. We suggest only general skills and competencies that should be improving.

The criteria are directly derived from the definition of social policy analysis, (above). The most important underlying dimension is the development of anticipation under uncertainty: given a new case-situation, can the student identify potential changes, blockages, ramifications, and interconnections. Students should, therefore, exhibit increasing abilities to:

1. State policy and program objectives so that they are both intelligible to non-specialists, and achievable within the time and resource limitations. This includes (a) realization of the interconnection of achievable ends with higher "levels" of goals and social values, and (b) differentiation of the possible scientific validity of the program's concepts from their ideological or theoretical appeal.

2. Isolate the social groups who will be affected: Who will benefit? Who will pay? Who will object? How can specific social responsibility be assured to maintain, as far as possible each group's millieu?

3. Analyze and anticipate short and long term economic costs of alternate strategies.

4. Forecast the interconnected social-technological consequences, to at least the third or fourth order.

5. Measure actual impacts throughout the program process; (a) especially at the earliest stages; (b) recognize the need for, and be able to design comprehensive scanning procedures to pick-up unanticipated developments; (c) both this scanning and #2 above, must be connected to "abort-options", (a built-in mechanism for flexible, and if necessary, total modification.)

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CHART ONE

SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS PARADIGM

1. The Proposed "Cure": Very briefly; what is wrong and, what will help?

2. The Conceptual background of the Problem: Specific definition of parts of the problem that will, and will not, be affected. Specific assumptions and predictions about what will change in the short, and the long run. What parts turned out, in reality, to be illusory or totally unconnected problems.

3. Ethical Considerations and Contrasting Value Positions: Usually most easily discovered by defining the underlying models of human motivation and/or abilities. Contradictory alternative positions should be explained or accounted for. Ethical controversies must also be made overt, and necessary protections outlined for all types of individuals involved.

4. The Specific Context and Necessitated Compromises: Limits on (1) the free operation of the chosen "cure"; and (2) the generalizability of the outcomes.

5. Definition of the Stimulus: Forecasting the Effects of Manipulable Variables: Operationalization of the "Cure." What exactly will be done to whom, and how will the effects be measured?

6. Isolation and Anticipation of Confounding Variables: What alternatives to the randomized experimental design will be used to deal with related, possibly causal, social forces?

7. Monitoring of Events and Adaptive Mechanisms: What preplanned efforts were made to follow the inevitable modifications of the stimulus between "Time One" and "Time Two." What adaptations were planned to react to these, and exogenous, changes.

8. Evaluation of Direct, Indirect, and Unanticipated Impacts: Definition of many "criterion" variables, that cover the entire range of possibly important changes. Measuring only the planned, obvious, effect at Time Two often ignores interactions and higher order impacts, as well as negative side effects.

9. Communication for Impact: How will results, at all stages, be fed into the policy process. Who is the designated laison to policymakers? What efforts will be made to dispose of policymakers contradictory definitions or beliefs?

CHART TWO

AN EIGHT COURSE, TWO YEAR CURRICULUM FOR
UNDERGRADUATE PREPARATION FOR
SOCIAL POLICY ANALYSIS

JUNIOR YEAR FIRST SEMESTER: ANTICIPATION/EVALUATION

Research For Policy Analysis

The "compromises" necessary when the academic audience is left behind: (1) adapting research origination and design to policy problems; (2) measurement of changes and their interactions; (3) effective analysis and presentation using "understandable" techniques.

Forecasting Social Futures

Sensitivity to situational potentials, and the ramifications of possible stimuli, will be increased through a comparison of: Social Impact Analysis, Time Series and Econometric Forecasting: Normative Forecasting; Current Models of Social Change; and the innovative techniques of Futuristics.

JUNIOR YEAR SECOND SEMESTER: ISOLATION AND CONTROL OF CONFOUNDING VARIABLES

Implementation of Policy

The types and classes of context variables will be described. Main importance will be placed on the problems imposed by relative costs and by existing socio-political structures. Techniques for introducing social change in organizations and/or communities will be studied within these contexts.

Field Research and Social Interaction

Insights from microsociology and collective behavior studies will emphasize that definitions of the reality and severity of problems are constructed during social interaction. Although essential for policy origination, this point is even more vital in the development of judgment about the quality and relevance of possible evaluation/monitoring data.

SENIOR YEAR FIRST SEMESTER: MONITORING SOCIAL CHANGE

Case Studies in Social Policy

Practice in differentiating inputs and effects using real life programs, within real social structures, will build skills in (1) operationalizing and measuring variables, (2) guessing the sequence of their effects, (3) composing models of the change process.

Social Indicators and the Quality of Life

Sensitivity to the variables that measure social and/or psychological success or failure in organizations or communities, will be developed through study of various attempts to achieve a National Social Indicators System.

SENIOR YEAR SECOND SEMESTER: COMMUNICATION

Modelling and Interactive Computing

Initially, the modelling experiences gathered in Case Studies will be translated onto the computer. Interactive modifications can therefore be taught using familiar data-models, and then applied to the new experiences of the seminar.

Seminar in Policy Analysis

A new design for the seminar process: instead of working toward a final report, frequent communication of partial results will be emphasized. Ways of finding and reporting progress, and of adapting individual projects to reflect reactions to these reports, will prepare students for interaction in policy situations.